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JUDGE W. C. JOHNS.

Judge W. C. Johns came to Illinois in 1849 with his parents, Dr. and Mrs. H. C. Johns. In 1853 the family located in Decatur. They came to Illinois from Circleville, Ohio, where Judge Johns was born December 7, 1846. They lived in Piatt County for five years before coming to Decatur.

He received part of his education in the Decatur public schools, then went to the model department of the Normal School. He was under the tutelage of Mr. Childs there until he went into the army in 1864. He was a private in Company E, One Hundred and Forty-fifth Illinois Volunteer Infantry, one hundred day regiment. After he was mustered out he attended Lombard University for six months and then entered the University of Michigan, from which he graduated in June, 1869.

The following summer Judge Johns studied law in the office of Crea & Ewing in Decatur. In the fall of 1869 he entered the Albany Law School and graduated from there in September, 1870. He studied for six months longer in the office of Crea & Ewing and then commenced the practice of law in Decatur. He continued to practice law until his election to the bench. One of his important cases was that of the famous Chicago drainage canal case in which he represented the attorney-general in taking testimony for the Supreme Court.

In 1880 he was elected state's attorney and from 1887 until 1891 he served in the State Senate.

In 1903 he was elected circuit judge of the Sixth Judicial District. He was again elected to the circuit bench in 1909, leading the field by about six hundred votes. In politics he was a staunch republican.

The age of Judge Johns was 67 years, 6 months and 17 days. He was but seven years old when the family moved to De-

catur. They first occupied the Dr. May house on East North Street, opposite the old high school. That was then one of the finest homes in Decatur. A few years later Dr. Johns erected the mansion on Johns hill.

In 1882 Judge Johns and Miss Nellie Harper, daughter of a Philadelphia minister, were married. Judge Johns erected a handsome residence on East Eldorado Street, the first door east of where St. Patrick's Church now stands. Mrs. Johns lived only a few years and then Judge Johns returned to the family home on the hill and lived there ever after. He is survived by his mother, Mrs. Jane M. Johns, now 88 years old, a brother, S. W. Johns of Decatur, and one sister, Mrs. C. B. T. Moore of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Judge Johns had no children of his own, yet he understood the small boy and was always deeply touched when it was necessary to send a boy to the reform school. Often he would return to his private office with tears rolling down his cheeks after he had sentenced some boys to the reform school, generally for stealing junk. "I don't like to do it. I would rather sentence a dozen guilty men than one little boy, but the law says I must," he said one day after sending six boys to the reform school. "I wish there was some way of punishing the men who buy this stuff from the boys, but we have no law covering them. They are the real offenders. We are born thieves. The baby sees something it thinks it wants and reaches for it. If it is not taught otherwise it will keep on taking what it wants all through life, regardless of who owns the property. A child must be educated to be honest."

It was then that he told a newspaper reporter to get a lawyer to draft a bill prohibiting the purchase of junk or other property from minors. John Hogan drafted the bill and Senator Henson put it through the Legislature and it is the first law Illinois ever had on the subject. Since then Judge Johns had no occasion to send boys to the reform school for stealing junk. He often spoke of the fact with satisfaction.

"Why, I could easily have been sent to the reform school when I was a boy," he said. "My father bought the first

reaper ever brought to this part of the country. It was an immense affair, very heavy and cumbersome, and the castings were all of brass. It was a regular horse killer, and finally father put it in the shed and didn't use it any more. About that time I learned that brass was worth money, and there was a circus coming to town. I took a few pieces of brass from that old reaper and went to the circus. There was enough brass on it to keep me in circus money for a long time. Whenever a boy is brought before me for stealing brass, I am filled with sympathy for him."

Judge Johns served eleven years and nine days as circuit judge. He was elected in 1903, and again in 1909. His first race was against Judge E. P. Vail for the republican nomination. In September, 1902, he and Judge Vail joined in a letter to the county central committee, proposing that the republican primaries should decide which of the two should have the Macon County delegates in the judicial convention. Judge Johns won. A little more than fourteen years before they had joined in a similar letter. That time Judge Vail secured the delegation from Macon County.

The Sixth Judicial District is composed of the counties of Macon, Moultrie, DeWitt, Piatt, Douglas and Champaign. Judge Johns' term would have expired June 15, 1915.

"Judge Johns held court in Decatur almost continuously for the past eleven years," said John Allen, circuit clerk. Three years ago he was ill most of the winter and Judge Cochran served for him. That was the longest time he was off the bench. Judge Johns had about twice as much work as the other two judges in this district. At least two-fifths of the court in the district is held in Decatur.

"In addition to holding court here, he has frequently presided for other judges in the district. About six years ago he was a candidate for the nomination for judge of the Supreme Court. The convention was held in Decatur. He was a factor in that convention, though he was defeated by Judge Dunn of Charleston."

Judge Johns left for California, expecting to sail for Honolulu, Hawaii, to spend the summer with his sister, wife of Admiral C. B. T. Moore. Before he left he told his friends at the court house good-bye. He said it would take him three days and a half to reach San Francisco, and that he expected to rest there for a few days and would probably sail Friday of that week. He had been in poor health for some time. During last winter, between terms of court, he made a trip to Summerville, South Carolina, in the hope of improving his health, but he was really in worse condition than before he left. He died in San Francisco June 25, 1914, and his remains were brought to Decatur, Illinois, for burial.

During the May term of the circuit court it was difficult for him to talk above a whisper, and instead of sitting on the bench he would occupy a chair among the lawyers and close to the witness stand so that it would not be so much of an effort to make himself heard. John Allen, clerk of the court, had to read the court's instructions to the juries.

Before he left Decatur Judge Johns told Mr. Allen that he would never return to the bench again. He said he intended to resign on his return home from Honolulu.

While he did not talk much of his physical condition, it was plain to all who knew him well that his strength was failing rapidly during the past few months. He probably realized that his days were numbered, and a few weeks ago he thought it possible to close up the business of the May term of court on a certain day, he notified all the lawyers who had cases in which he had given decisions to have the decrees signed up by him by that date.

Those who knew Judge Johns closely knew that he had worked very hard the past few months. Besides his duties as judge he worked hard on the briefs to be sent to the Supreme Court regarding the Johns land case, in which it was sought to reform the trust by which the estate of his father was held intact. The land having been voted into the city, the burden of taxation and special assessments would sacrifice some of it

unless it could be platted into city lots and sold, a condition impossible under the terms of the trust.

One of his last acts in this connection was the reading of the proofs of the brief he had prepared. He sent for the printer before he had finished writing the brief, and told him that he must have it all ready to send away by the next evening. It was then late in the afternoon. The work was done and in commenting on it later he declared it the most wonderful evidence of the advancement in the printing business in Decatur that he could recall.

"By 6:00 o'clock yesterday evening," he said, "that brief was finished. It was set up, the proofs corrected, printed and the copies bound and ready to send away by 6:00 o'clock. A few years ago that would have been absolutely impossible. I feel more relieved in getting that brief sent away than anything I have experienced in a long time."

Before he was judge and the dignity of his position deterred many from addressing him with undue familiarity, he was known to everybody as Corry Johns. He was christened Corwin Johns and that was the only name he had until he was 16 years old. His schoolmates and friends as he grew up called him Corry and the name stuck. When he was 16 years old his grandfather, William Martin, asked him to add William to his name, which he did, and his official signature has since been W. C. Johns, though his more intimate friends always called him Corry.

He was named after Tom Corwin, an intimate friend of Dr. Johns. Tom Corwin visited Decatur in 1861, and on that occasion Corwin Johns made his first speech. "Mother wrote that speech for me," he said when telling about it a few years ago, "and it was a corking good effort."

Judge Johns preserved more strict decorum in his court room than any judge ever on the bench in Macon County. He drew a close line between his social and judicial duties, and never allowed the former to interfere in the latter. A close friend stood no better chance of escaping jury duty than the utmost stranger, and the lawyers at the bar were required to

observe the rules of practice and conduct themselves with dignity.

No levity was ever permitted and several times he threatened to clear the court room when people in the audience would laugh at some remark of lawyer or witness, or show an inclination to make a demonstration.

Off the bench Judge Johns was the soul of good humor. He was a delightful conversationalist, a remarkably good story-teller and one of the best of listeners. He was kind, companionable, lovable, with a heart as tender as a school girl's. He could talk well on any subject and he was always worth listening to. Before he ascended to the bench he was in great demand as a public speaker, but in late years he had no time for that. Only once or twice has he consented in recent years to make a public address. At the founders' day exercises at the James Millikin University in 1910 he delivered the commemorative oration for the late James Millikin, and it was a most eloquent tribute.

He never knowingly did any one an injustice. His decisions were seldom reversed by the higher courts. He has been known to reverse his own decisions on one or two occasions. He wanted to be right, and if he was wrong he was glad to admit it.

His devotion to his aged mother was beautiful. He never wanted anything to worry her, and kept a tender watch over her, and he was more than ever careful of her after the death of his sister, Mrs. Fannie Johns Sedgwick, a few years ago.

He was a member of the University Club and whenever present took an active part in the discussions and his opinions always carried weight.

He was an active member of the Illinois State Historical Society and his death is a great loss to the Society.